

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MEXICO 02581 271909Z

70

ACTION COA-02

INFO OCT-01 ARA-16 ISO-00 L-03 EB-11 SCA-01 H-03 INR-10

DLOS-06 PRS-01 CG-00 DOTE-00 SCS-03 DRC-01 DODE-00

/058 W

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R 271715Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 839

INFO AMCONSUL MERIDA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EFIS, MX

SUBJ: SEIZURE OF U.S. FISHING VESSEL VILCO

1. AT 2230 ON MARCH 22 FV VILCO WAS STOPPED BY MEXICAN NAVY PATROL BOAT ID-15, ACCUSED OF FISHING IN MEXICAN WATERS AND ORDERED INTO THE PORT OF ISLA MUJERES. MEXICAN NAVAL OFFICER CLAIMED THAT AT TIME OF SEIZURE POSITION OF VILCO WAS ABOUT 10 MILES OFFSHORE.

2. AT TIME OF SEIZURE THERE WERE APPROXIMATELY 25 U.S. VESSELS FISHING IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY AND 4 OF THESE DECIDED TO FOLLOW THE VILCO INTO ISLA MUJERES TO PROTEST THE ACTION BY THE MEXICAN NAVY SINCE THEY WERE CERTAIN THAT THEY WERE IN INTERNATIONAL WATER. THESE FOUR VESSELS, IDENTIFIED AS THE JOCELYN, MR. TOM, LADY HELEN, AND THE FRANK AND LOUISE ENTERED ISLA MUJERES ON MARCH 23 WITH THE VILCO AND THE ID-15.

3. CAPTAIN OF PORT DECIDED THAT 4 ACCOMPANYING VESSELS WERE GUILTY OF ENTERING PORT WITHOUT PERMISSION AND SET FINE OF 40 U.S. DOLLARS PER BOAT.

4. ON MARCH 25 STATEMENTS WERE TAKEN FROM U.S. CAPTAINS AND FROM MEXICAN NAVAL OFFICER. THESE ARE BEING FORWARDED TO MEXICO CITY FOR FINAL DECISION. DIRECTOR OF FISHERY REGIONS VEGA RIVAS ISSUED
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PAGE 02 MEXICO 02581 271909Z

INSTRUCTIONS THAT VILCO COULD BE RELEASED ON PAYMENT OF BOND OF

\$10,000 U.S. IN CONVERSATION WITH FISHATT VEGA RIVAS STATED THAT BOND WAS SET HIGH SINCE MEXICO CITY OFFICIALS DID NOT HAVE DETAILS OF THE CASE AND THAT WHEN THE STATEMENTS OF ALL INTERESTED PARTIES ARRIVED IN MEXICO CITY THE FINE WOULD PROBABLY BE LESS. FISHATT WAS INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN DISCUSSION OF THE CASE WHEN DOCUMENTS ARRIVE IN MEXICO CITY.

5. VILCO IS OWNED BY ROBERT VILLERS OF FT. MYERS, FLA., AND CAPTAINED BY HIS SON, JOSEPH VILLERS. FISHATT TELEPHONED ROBERT VILLERS EVENING OF MARCH 25 AND ADVISED THAT HE NOT POST BOND BUT WAIT FOR FINAL DECISION FROM MEXICO CITY. VILLERS CONCERNED THAT NO ONE FROM CONSULATE MERIDA OR EMBASSY PRESENT AT ISLA MUJERES TO HELP HIS SON. FISHATT SPOKE WITH CONSULAR SOMMER IN MERIDA WHO STATED IT IMPOSSIBLE TO GO TO ISLA MUJERES BECAUSE OF OTHER PRESSING BUSINESS AND THAT HE COULD NOT TAKE PART IN MEXICAN LEGAL PROCEEDING AT ANY RATE.

6. ON MORNING OF MARCH 26 JOSEPH VILLERS CALLED EMBASSY AND THREE-WAY CONVERSATION WAS HELD BETWEEN VILLERS, CONSUL GENERAL AND FISHATT. VILLERS EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT THAT NO CONSULAR OFFICER HAD COME TO ISLA MUJERES TO ASSIST HIM BUT SAID HE HAD LOCATED AN ENGLISH-SPEAKING MEXICAN WHO WAS ASSISTING. EMBOFF EXPLAINED THAT PRESENCE OF A CONSULAR OFFICER WOULD NOT HAVE AFFECTED THE PROCEEDINGS AT ISLA MUJERES AND THAT WE COULD BEST BE OF SERVICE BY DEALING WITH OFFICIALS IN MEXICO CITY. VILLERS ASKED THAT FISHATT CALL HIS FATHER TO REPORT THAT MONEY WHICH HAD BEEN SENT MARCH 24 VIA WESTERN UNION TO PAY FINES OF OTHER FOUR BOATS HAD NOT ARRIVED. HE READ STATEMENT WHICH HE HAD GIVEN PORT CAPTAIN IN WHICH HE ESTIMATED HIS POSITION AT 15 MILES FROM NEAREST LAND, CAPE CATOUCHE, AND THAT OTHER BOATS, SOME WITH EXCELLENT RADAR HAD VERIFIED HIS POSITION. HE SAID THAT MEXICAN GUNBOAT HAD BEEN MOVING ABOUT AMONG THE FLEET FOR TWO DAYS BUT HAD MADE NO ATTEMPT TO INTERFERE UNTIL HE WAS STOPPED. AT TIME OF SEIZURE HE SAID MANY BOATS WERE CLOSER IN SHORE THAN HE WAS BUT NONE WERE INSIDE MEXICAN WATERS. VILLERS SAID THAT 7 OTHER U.S. VESSELS WERE REQUESTING PERMISSION TO ENTER ISLA MUJERES TO GIVE TESTIMONY IN HIS BEHALF.

7. SOON AFTER FIRST CALL JOSEPH VILLERS CALLED AGAIN TO ASK THAT FISHATT SPEAK WITH CAPTAIN GORDON HORTON OF THE MR. TOM AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 MEXICO 02581 271909Z

CAPTAIN FLOYD LEWIS OF THE LADY HELEN. BOTH CONFIRMED THAT THEIR RADAR AND LORAN SHOWED VILCO TO BE 15 MILES OFFSHORE. THEY ALSO SAID THAT AT TIME OF SEIZURE THE RADAR REFLECTOR OF MEXICAN GUNBOAT WAS NOT TURNING WHICH WOULD INDICATE IT WAS INOPERATIVE.

8. YISHATT SPOKE WITH ROBERT VILLERS IN FT. MYERS, MR. VILLERS SAID HE FELT THE EMBASSY WAS DOING ALL IT COULD TO

HELP. HE ALSO SAID THAT REPORTER SUSAN GRAHAM OF THE FT.
MYERS NEWS PRESS WOULD ARRIVE IN ISLA MUJERES MARCH 26
WITH MONEY TO PAY FINES FOR THE OTHER 4 BOATS AND INSTRUCTIONS
THAT THEY SHOULD LEAVE PORT IMMEDIATELY ON PAYING THE FINES.

9. FISHATT IS IN CONTACT WITH PROPER MEXICAN OFFICIALS
AND WILL TAKE PART INFORMALLY IN DISCUSSION OF CASE
WHEN DOCUMENTS ARRIVE IN MEXICO CITY. NAVAL ATTACHE
DISCUSSING CASE WITH MEXICAN NAVY.
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Message Attributes

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